



LEGAL AID
SOCIETY OF HAWAI'I



HOW TO AVOID PROBLEMS IN PUBLIC HOUSING

TEN HELPFUL TIPS

IMPORTANT

This brochure applies to tenants in public housing developments operated by the Hawaii Public Housing Authority (“HPHA”).



This brochure was created
through the AmeriCorps
Project of the Legal Aid
Society of Hawaii



This material is based upon work supported by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) under AmeriCorps Grant No. 13ACHHI0010003. Opinions or points of view expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of, or a position that is endorsed by, CNCS or the AmeriCorps program.

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Revised August 2016. [H22} Avoiding Problems in Public Housing.

1. Pay Rent on Time

Failure to pay rent on time is the most common reason why tenants are evicted from public housing developments operated by the Hawaii Public Housing Authority (“HPHA”). It is extremely difficult to regain access to public housing after being evicted. Therefore, paying rent should be your top priority. You should pay rent before paying any/all other bills. In dire situations, it is better to borrow money to pay rent on time rather than risk eviction and late penalties.

2. NEVER Withhold Rent

NEVER withhold rent without first speaking to an attorney. Even if your landlord did something wrong, you can still be evicted if you do not pay your rent.

3. Request Rent Adjustments Promptly

If your income goes down, immediately request a rent adjustment – your Property Manager should reduce your monthly rent so you can continue your occupancy. If you do not immediately request an adjustment, you will end up paying too much for rent and you will not be able to get the money back retroactively. You are also required to report increases in your income within ten (10) days of when the change occurs. *See Legal Aid’s brochure “Public Housing: Changes in Household Income & Rent Adjustments” for more information.*

4. Know the Rules and Follow Them

If you violate the rules of the lease, including the house rules, you will eventually be evicted. Common violations include unauthorized guests and/or occupants, noise violations, damaging the apartment, and drinking alcohol and smoking in restricted areas. Read your lease and house rules thoroughly before moving into your unit. If you receive a notice of violation for an act you did not commit, submit a written grievance request immediately. *See Legal Aid’s brochure “Public Housing: The Grievance Procedure” for more information.*

5. Choose Your Guests Carefully

You are directly responsible for any/all actions of your guests. The entire household may be evicted for even one incident caused by a guest. For example, if a guest brings drugs into the unit without your knowledge or consent, HPHA may evict all named household members. Make sure every family member knows the rules and the consequences for breaking them. Do not allow people to visit you if you think they will break the rules.

6. Ask for Help

For nearly every need – whether it involves rent, filing a grievance, applying for transfer, or even getting new furniture – there are many organizations that you may turn to for help. Call the Aloha United Way 2-1-1 Hotline or visit www.auw211.org to find the help you need. You may also visit www.legallaidhawaii.org for a list of active service providers in your area.

7. Act Promptly

Take immediate action when problems arise. If you receive a notice that you are in violation of your rental agreement, you should contact your Property Manager immediately. You may also contact the Legal Aid Intake Hotline to learn more about your situation. Problems become increasingly difficult to resolve the longer you wait to address them.

8. Keep Good Records

It is important to keep records of any/all rental documents (e.g., leases, house rules, rent payment receipts, repair requests, etc.) in case you need to refer to them in the future. Critically, you should keep receipts for all payments you make. You should also keep a file with all letters that you receive from HPHA and/or grievances you submit to HPHA.

9. Make a Paper Trail

If problems arise (e.g., if you receive a rule violation notice), send a letter to your Property Manger regarding the alleged problem/violation. If you are cited for a rule violation that you did not commit, you should contest the violation in writing. Make sure you keep a copy of everything you send your Property Manager. If you hand-deliver your letter, have the Management office mark/stamp your copy as having been received. Keep a copy of all grievance requests. Do not rely on a brief, verbal exchange to resolve a problem. ALWAYS put your conversations in writing.

10. Be a Good Neighbor

Most problems, other than those relating to non-payment of rent, can be avoided by being a good neighbor. It is important that you stand up for your rights, but you should be courteous and respectful while doing so.

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Legal Aid's Hotline:

O'ahu: 808.536.4302
Neighbor Islands: 1.800.499.4302

REMEMBER:

This brochure is meant to provide general information, and does not provide specific legal advice about your individual case. The law often changes. Each case is different.

Hawai'i Immigrant Justice Center *at the*
Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i
www.hijcenter.org
www.legalaidhawaii.org

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